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RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

AN INTERPRETATION OF ECCLESIASTES¹

This is an interesting, instructive book by a competent scholar who handles his materials in a large way, presenting in a clear, living fashion the outline of Hebrew literature as a preparation for the statement of the problems connected with the Book of Ecclesiastes. One hundred and ninety-five pages of this volume are devoted to (1) the nature of Hebrew literature and the course of its development, (2) the place of Ecclesiastes in the literature, various considerations showing its lateness, and (3) an exposition of "The Gentle Cynic's" philosophy of life, or, in other words, a systematic examination of the teaching in these parts that our author regards as original. In the remaining pages of the book we have a translation of this "Original Koheleth," and this is followed by an appendix containing the various commentaries: (1) "The Pious," (2) "The Maxim," and (3) "The Miscellaneous" interpolations. The real question that remains in connection with Ecclesiastes is that of its integrity, for by all who follow modern critical methods its date and place in Hebrew literature are settled by its language, its literary characters, and its philosophic style. In 1895 Dr. E. J. Dillon (*The Sceptics of the Old Testament*) published a rearrangement and translation, following Bickell's suggestion that the original leaves of the book had been mixed (see Jastrow, p. 125). Wildeboer and others, rejecting Dr. P. Haupt's radical reconstruction, have still found an underlying unity. Siegfried, with K¹, K², K³, K⁴ (Pessimist, Sadducee, Pharisee, Proverbialist), and other interpolations and editors carried analysis to an extreme. McNeille and Barton have not gone to any such lengths, but have felt themselves compelled to accept the position that the only way to solve the contradictions and harsh transitions is to accept the principle that in order that the book might gain an entrance to the sacred canon it had to submit to radical revision. Dr Jastrow takes his stand on this position and gives a genial sympathetic exposition of a writer whom, like Renan,

¹ *A Gentle Cynic. Being the Book of Ecclesiastes.* By Morris Jastrow, Jr. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1919. 256 pages. \$2.00.

he finds "charming" and "amiable." From its own standpoint, which we cannot now discuss in detail, his book is a most successful and charming piece of work.

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FOLKLORE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The three stately volumes of Sir James Frazer on *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*¹ raise expectations which they do not altogether fulfil. A work with such a title by the gifted author of *The Golden Bough* and of such generous proportions naturally leads the reader to suppose that he is at last in possession of all the available data upon the subject. An analysis of the contents of the book will indicate how far this is from being the case. There are some 1,620 pages of reading-matter and an index of 85 pages. These 1,620 pages are distributed into four parts: "The Early Ages of the World," Vol. I, pp. 3-387; "The Patriarchal Age," Vol. I, pp. 391-569, and Vol. II, pp. 1-434; "The Times of the Judges and Kings," Vol. II, pp. 437-571, and Vol. III, pp. 1-90; "The Law," Vol. III, pp. 93-480.

It would seem as if under these four rubrics and in the abundant space allotted to them all the folklore in the Old Testament could be included. But what have we actually got? In Part I but five topics are discussed: "The Creation," "The Fall," "The Mark of Cain," "The Flood," and "The Tower of Babel." But of the 385 pages assigned to this part, 258 are given to "The Flood" alone. In Part II ten topics are covered: "The Covenant of Abraham," "The Heirship of Jacob or Ultimogeniture," "Jacob and the Kidskins or the New Birth," "Jacob at Bethel," "Jacob at the Well," "Jacob's Marriage," "Jacob and the Mandrakes," "The Covenant of the Cairn," "Jacob at the Ford of the Jabbok," and "Joseph's Cup." But of the 600 odd pages devoted to this part, nearly 400 are given to the two subjects of ultimogeniture, or the right of the youngest son (138 pages), and Jacob's marriage (248 pages). In these two monographs, for that is what they are, the author has wandered far away from his immediate field. Nearly half of the first of these is taken up with a discussion of the meaning of the *jus primae noctis*, which has to do with an ecclesiastical custom in the Middle Ages. The excuse for this digression is the fact that the

Folk-Lore in the Old Testament. By James George Frazer. New York: Macmillan, 1919. 3 vols. xxv+569, xxi+571, xviii+566 pages. \$15.00.